

Report of External Evaluation and Review

The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand
trading as Open Polytechnic

Confident in educational performance

Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 17 July 2015

Contents

Purpose of this Report.....	3
Introduction	3
1. TEO in context.....	3
2. Scope of external evaluation and review	6
3. Conduct of external evaluation and review	9
Summary of Results	10
Findings	13
Recommendations	46
Appendix	47

MoE Number: 6022
NZQA Reference: C14387
Date of EER visit: 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 April 2014

Final report

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. TEO in context

Name of TEO:	The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, trading as Open Polytechnic
Type:	Institute of Technology and Polytechnic (ITP)
Location:	3 Cleary Street, Private Bag 31914, Lower Hutt
Delivery sites:	Main Campus: 3 Cleary St, Lower Hutt For international students, Open Polytechnic has site approval from NZQA as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Auckland 1 – collaborative arrangement for delivery of the Graduate Diploma in Business in association with New Zealand Management Academies (Sylvia Park Campus)• Auckland 2 – collaborative arrangement for delivery of year 3 of the Bachelor of Applied Science in association with YooBee School of Design• Wellington – collaborative arrangement for delivery of the Graduate Diploma in Business in association with Making Futures Happen
First registered:	1946 as Technical Correspondence School 1963 as Technical Correspondence Institute 1990 as The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand

Final report

	2004 as The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand trading as Open Polytechnic
Courses currently delivered:	<p>Open Polytechnic offers a wide range of programmes leading to qualifications at levels 1-7 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. See http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/course-accreditations.do?providerId=602257001&delSiteInd=0</p> <p>Open Polytechnic has NZQA approval and accreditation for eight degrees: Bachelor of Business; Bachelor of Applied Management; Bachelor of Applied Science; Bachelor of Arts; Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education (ECE)); Bachelor of Engineering Technology; Bachelor of Social Work; and Bachelor of Information Technology.</p> <p>Graduate diploma programmes are offered in strategic management, professional accounting, human resources management, business, environmental management, and primary science teaching.</p> <p>Certificate and diploma programmes are offered in early childhood education and care, information and library services, psychology, communication studies, humanities, social sciences, e-learning, mental health support, engineering (electrical, mechanical, plumbing), agriculture, horticulture, environment, pharmacy, business, management, legal executive, business administration, real estate, quality assurance, financial services, fitness, sterilising technology, interior design, foundation and career development, and NCEA.</p>
Code of Practice:	Open Polytechnic is a signatory to the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students and is bound to comply with the requirements of the code.
Number of students:	Domestic: approximately 32,000 in 2013 (Open Polytechnic data) – equivalent to 5,732 equivalent full-time students (EFTS); 17 per cent Māori (slightly higher than the New Zealand demographic); 10 per cent Pasifika (slightly higher than the New Zealand demographic)

	International: 57 international students residing overseas, and 44 residing in New Zealand; approximately 0.3 per cent of the total
Number of staff:	382 full-time equivalents (as at 4 April 2014) 332 full-time, 81 part-time
Scope of active accreditation to deliver programmes and assess students for qualifications:	<p>Open Polytechnic has a wide scope of accreditation covering agriculture, business, community and social services, computing and IT, core generic, education, engineering and technology, health, humanities, law and security, planning and construction, sciences, and service sector.</p> <p>It offers a wide range of programmes leading to qualifications at levels 1-7. See http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/course-accreditations.do?providerId=602257001&delSiteInd=0</p> <p>Open Polytechnic has professional affiliations with the New Zealand Teachers Council for the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) and Diploma of Teaching (ECE); with the New Zealand Institute of Chartered Accountants and CPA Australia for the Bachelor of Business (Accounting Major); Library and Information Association of New Zealand for the library studies programmes; Institute of Professional Engineers, Engineers Australia, and the University of Southern Queensland for the Bachelor of Engineering Technology; and the Social Workers Registration Board for the Bachelor of Social Work.</p>
Distinctive characteristics:	<p>Open Polytechnic specialises in open distance learning. Learning and assessment materials are being increasingly delivered online, but some are still in hard-copy format sent by post or courier.</p> <p>Open Polytechnic contracts a reputable market research company, Colmar Brunton, to conduct an annual student satisfaction survey. It also periodically contracts a respected economics research agency, BERL, to carry out further analysis which includes the survey results.</p>

A high proportion, approximately 70 per cent, of Open Polytechnic students are already part or full-time employed.

Recent significant changes:

Open Polytechnic has agreements with six of the current 12 industry training organisations (ITOs).

It is currently continuing to develop collaborative arrangements with large private training establishments.

There have been no other specific significant changes other than those referred to in the body of this report.

Previous quality assurance history:

NZQA was Confident in the educational performance of Open Polytechnic and Confident in its capability in self-assessment at the previous external evaluation and review (EER) in June/July 2011.

Open Polytechnic's assessment is externally quality assured by ITOs and NZQA, where most results for 2013 have been consistently at the national standard.

A small number of anomalies have been found in Open Polytechnic's reporting of results. The quality of its applications for accreditation and approvals has been consistently high.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The focus areas for this EER were chosen to be as representative as possible. They include different levels, certificates to degrees, course and qualification completions, recent and more longstanding programmes from the faculty and its schools/business units, and different modes such as submitting assessments online and delivering content online, offline, print-based, or blended. Some focus areas apply across the organisation, while others are specific education programmes. The following focus areas were agreed by NZQA and Open Polytechnic following a scoping meeting.

1.	Governance, management and strategy	This focus area is mandatory because it has such a significant influence on what students receive by way of quality education.
2.	Education Solutions	Education Solutions is a unit/department of Open Polytechnic responsible for the development of distance and online learning resources.

Final report

3.	Education Technology, Logistics	These administrative functions are important for an open distance learning provider because they are responsible for the delivery of course materials to students, mainly online but also by post.
4.	Education programmes (ECE)	<p>The Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education (ECE)) (Level 7) was a focus area at the previous EER. It is a three-year degree with graduates for the first time, external regulatory body involvement (New Zealand Teachers Council), high student numbers, and blended delivery with workshops. At the time of the EER visit, the programme had approximately 610 students, including 79 Māori and 15 Pasifika.</p> <p>This focus area also includes the National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 3). According to Open Polytechnic, this was a problem area a couple of years ago when the programme was structured around the 18 or so component unit standards. Students can pathway from this national certificate to the Certificate in Early Childhood Practice (Level 4) and/or the degree.</p>
5.	Foundation programmes with the Department of Corrections	<p>This is an example of Open Polytechnic's responsiveness to government priorities, adaptability of learning resources to meet special circumstances, and collaborative arrangements. The programmes cater for mainly levels 1-3. There are ~250 EFTS, including a high proportion of Māori and Pasifika learners. At the time of the EER visit, this focus area had approximately 813 students, 426 of whom were Māori and 98 Pasifika.</p> <p>This area includes level 1 and 2 programmes such as NCEA, Certificate in Career and Self Development (Get Ahead Skills), and Certificate in Work and Life Skills (Get Ahead Choices), previously delivered in collaboration with about six community organisations.</p>
6.	National Certificate in Mental Health and Addiction Support (Level 4)	The National Certificate in Mental Health and Addiction Support (Level 4) is for people working in mental health and addiction services as support workers employed by district health boards or

Final report

		<p>within the community. A part-time programme, it is designed to be completed over 18 months.</p> <p>The programme has been revised to meet the new version of the qualification. Like other programmes, it will need to be further reviewed in light of the TRoQ (Targeted Review of Qualifications). There were about 70 students enrolled at the time of the EER.</p>
7.	New Zealand Diploma in Business (NZDipBus) (Level 6)	<p>This national qualification programme is popular. It includes pathways and progressions into and beyond NZDipBus. Students can enter NZDipBus from lower levels and upon completion go on to higher levels and the Bachelor of Business degree.</p> <p>This was not a focus area at the previous EER. At the time of this EER visit, there were approximately 460 students, 60 of whom were Māori and 21 Pasifika.</p>
8.	How well is learning assessed? How well does moderation support assessment?	<p>Learning and assessment are vital to any tertiary education organisation, but the processes are different in an open distance learning provider.</p>
9.	<p>Māori and Pasifika learner achievement and support</p> <p>Non-Māori and non-Pasifika learner achievement and support</p>	<p>This focus area covers what Open Polytechnic knows and understands about Māori learner achievement and Pasifika learner achievement, and how it maximises achievement and outcomes by matching learners' needs and providing responsive and effective education and support.</p> <p>For further details, see: http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/how-nzqa-evaluates-educational-performance-in-external-evaluation-and-review/</p> <p>This focus area also includes support for non-Māori and non-Pasifika. Refer also to key evaluation question 5.</p>

3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

The EER was conducted by a team of five evaluators over six days – three days in each of two consecutive weeks – at the Lower Hutt campus of Open Polytechnic.

Discussions were held with the executive management team, representatives of the Open Polytechnic Council, senior managers and members of the Open Polytechnic academic board and academic programme evaluation committee, staff of relevant service areas, programme leaders, teaching staff, and students – the evaluators spoke to just a few students face-to-face (student representatives on the Open Polytechnic academic board and Rimutaka Prison students) because they were off-site (distance learning), and a few by phone.

These conversations were complemented by Open Polytechnic's self-assessment information submitted before the EER and evidence presented during it, including external survey reports by Colmar Brunton, BERL economic analysis, academic programme evaluation reviews, some Open Polytechnic schools' evaluations, and advisory committee, employer and graduate surveys where these were available.

The evaluation team considered a range of documents submitted by Open Polytechnic prior to, during and after the EER visit.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Confident** in the educational performance of **The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand trading as Open Polytechnic**.

The key reasons for this are:

- A significant increase in achievement of all learners as measured by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) course and qualification completion indicators. This has come about by:
 - management of EFTS
 - increased support for students
 - modified systems.
- Māori learner achievement and Pasifika learner achievement have improved over the past four years, although a gap persists compared with non- Māori and non-Pasifika achievement.
- Graduates indicate that they have improved their performance at work and have increased their income. This information has been obtained through an annual student satisfaction survey and periodic economic reports. This information could be strengthened by a closer analysis of outcomes for graduates at the programme level.
- Stakeholder engagement is strong in the development stage, but the ongoing systematic engagement with graduates, employers and other key stakeholders across the range of programmes is variable.
- Matching the needs of many learners well, especially as they relate to flexibility of delivery in terms of time, location and pace.
- The effectiveness of key initiatives to support learners, such as providing better information and advice on enrolment, targeted writing support, and developing a Māori Office (to provide learning support and resources).
- The strengthening evidence base used by the senior management team to understand performance and make decisions. However, this use of evidence to understand performance, matched needs and valued outcomes was variable at the programme level.
- Open distance learning increases the challenges for Open Polytechnic to improve its learner achievement, but it will be using a wider range of sources of information and feedback to identify areas of improvement in 2015.

Final report

Overall, learner achievement rates have improved significantly, but the body of evidence is not sufficiently clear and comprehensive with regard to highly effective processes that contribute to a range of valued outcomes for learners, graduates and other key stakeholders.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand trading as Open Polytechnic**.

The key reasons for this are:

- The quality and validity of self-assessment such as the annual programme evaluation reports provide the opportunity for reflection on programme performance, but there are areas where the self-assessment to do this could be strengthened, for example the range and robustness of stakeholder feedback.
- The focus on educational performance indicators (EPIs) has tended to contribute to Open Polytechnic's self-assessment becoming limited in its scope, driven more by quantitative than qualitative data. While the annual student satisfaction surveys and periodic economic reports give some valuable data, achievement and outcomes data at a programme level is limited.
- The improvement in systems related to EPIs. This is done mainly through the use of dashboards, which enable senior managers to view up-to-date EPI progress. However, this data needs to be used more consistently across the organisation.
- Learner achievement data in foundation programmes such as Department of Corrections programmes is unclear.
- The Open Polytechnic commissions annual surveys and periodic economic reports that give it an understanding of graduate outcomes and satisfaction. However, the generic nature of these reports does not give detailed information at a programme level. The graduate outcomes information available at programme level is variable and so the value to graduates cannot always be determined.
- There is stakeholder engagement in the development and design of programmes, but industry representation is not always present in ongoing programme documentation, including programme reviews.

Overall, there are processes in place to review programmes and activities, but there is a need to build stronger reporting tools to enable greater analyses of all

stakeholders' needs. This will result in an ability to satisfy these needs more effectively.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Open Polytechnic has invested considerable resources over the past five years towards raising the EPI used by the TEC to measure performance and allocate funding. In doing so, Open Polytechnic has responded to both the TEC's expectation and a recommendation from the 2011 EER that as an open distance learning provider it should be able to achieve course completion and qualification completion results similar to those of other New Zealand institutes of technology and polytechnics.

Table 1 shows the significant progress Open Polytechnic has made with regard to the course and qualification completions of its learners since 2009. In each cell of this table, the first number indicates the overall percentage; the second, how these rates compared with those of other ITPs, expressed as a ranking.²

	2009 %	2010 %	2011 %	2012 %	2013 %
Course completion (rating)	62 (17/20)	64 (19/20)	73 (15/18)	80 (9/18)	80 (10/18)
Qualification completion (rating)	21 (20/20)	32 (20/20)	59 (13/18)	78 (1/18)	79 (4/18)
Student progression (rating)	20 (16/20)	20 (19/20)	18 (15/18)	25 (16/18)	32 (14/18)
Student retention (rating)	24 (20/20)	29 (20/20)	30 (18/18)	40 (18/18)	50 (18/18)

A significant pattern of improvement is evident through the completion rates, especially as these relate to courses which are generally considered to be the most reliable of the EPI areas, and in Open Polytechnic's TEC's rankings in comparison with the other ITPs. Qualification completion rates are a less reliable indicator (as they are affected by far more variables) but still show improvement. Student

¹ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

² For the period 2009-2010, there were 20 ITPs. For the period 2011-2013, there were 18 ITPs.

progression and student retention show less improvement from a low base, but the high proportion of employed students and then fact that Open Polytechnic is an open distance learning provider reduce the significance of this data compared with mainly face-to-face providers. Open Polytechnic is now comparable with other polytechnics in course completions and has improved its performance against TEC targets set previously for mainly funding purposes. It has also met or exceeded TEC targets set some time previously for mainly funding purposes, except for successful qualification completions for Pasifika learners at levels 1-3. Overall, learner achievement is much stronger than it was.

Open Polytechnic has used various means to achieve these much-improved results. These fall broadly within three areas – management of EFTS, increased student support, modified systems – as discussed below. Management of EFTS has included measures such as:

- Termination of programmes with low EPIs (with enrolled students having an opportunity to complete)
- Limiting the EFTS allocated to programmes with poor EPIs
- A shift in the mix of provision to a higher proportion of higher-level EFTS-funded courses (for example degrees/engineering/science), as a result of the TEC's funding decision for level 1 and 2 qualifications
- The reporting of qualification achievement of three large enrolling programmes which previously only had externally awarded qualifications, for example the legal executive diploma awarded by the New Zealand Law Society and two New Zealand Institute of Management qualifications
- Development of pathways for students from other ITPs and private training establishments (which enables more students to gain qualifications without students consuming as many EFTS at the Open Polytechnic as indicated by the qualification's EFTS value)
- Application of stricter entry criteria to ensure students have a better and more realistic chance of succeeding
- Support and then prompt withdrawal of students who do not engage with their programme
- Advising past and current graduates of further study and qualification opportunities (this enhances retention/progression EPIs)

It is unclear how well these measures, although leading to improved performance, took into account students' or other stakeholders' needs when deciding whether to continue some programmes or not. For example, some lower-level Pasifika programmes were dropped once they were no longer externally funded, which had a negative impact on Pasifika participation and achievement rates. The success

Final report

and value of the use of residual lower-level funding to deliver Department of Corrections programmes are unclear. Open Polytechnic has identified programmes with poor EPIs but which have strategic or academic potential or needs such as in mental health and addiction, and allocated limited EFTS to them so they can continue. The polytechnic has made what it regarded as essential improvements and intends to upgrade such programmes further when TRoQ outcomes are finalised.

Measures designed to support students include:

- Closer management of individual students to maximise their chances of success, which may mean limiting the number of courses some students may enrol in concurrently (i.e. encouragement of sequential rather than simultaneous enrolments whereby students may enrol in one or two programmes rather than three at a time per trimester – this has helped to produce significant increases in course and qualification completions, possibly because there were fewer ‘unproductive’ EFTS)
- Considerable investment in supporting students, especially at the beginning through course selection and first assessments and implementation of a Māori strategy with a discrete unit solely focused on Māori student support (Open Polytechnic has recently begun to develop a similar approach for Pasifika students)
- Development of progression pathways for students
- Following up students who have almost completed in the past, encouraging them to re-enrol and providing them with personalised learning support so that they can complete remaining courses and qualifications
- Implementation of the engagement strategy and use of the engagement tool to evaluate the impacts of initiatives from the student support services strategy on learner achievement.

These measures are more student-centred and provide the opportunity for further worthwhile improvements in learner achievement.

The third area, modified systems, has resulted in better business reporting. Better systems enable the monitoring of EPI data and help Open Polytechnic to identify areas for improvement, take actions to effect such improvement, and measure the results of such actions.

Other related initiatives include: EFTS and EPI business reporting to all staff; increasing use of online marking; review of moderation, and the development of the Education Solutions, Education Technology and Logistics teams.

The direct impact of all these initiatives on educational performance was not always clearly evidenced by Open Polytechnic, but such initiatives have collectively contributed to overall EPI improvement.

Final report

Participation and achievement rates for Māori students have improved for four of the past five years. Open Polytechnic was able to offset to some extent its loss of level 1-2 funding and any negative impact on Māori participation, and its achievement rates in 2013, by using its residual lower-level funding to support its focus on the Department of Corrections programmes. There was a marginal fall in Māori achievement at higher levels in 2013, which Open Polytechnic identified.

Pasifika participation rates declined in 2013. This was partly the result of Open Polytechnic losing its funding at levels 1-3 for 2013, which also had a negative impact on Pasifika achievement rates. Pasifika numbers are small and spread over most levels. Open Polytechnic did not have a Pasifika strategy at the time of the EER visit. Such a strategy may help address the low participation rates and achievement of Pasifika students. Since the visit, a new Pasifika appointment has developed a draft strategy as the first step towards addressing this area.

The significant feature of the self-assessment of learner achievement has been the ongoing and regular reporting of progress within schools and faculty, as well as EFTS and EPI business reporting, including dashboards, which are used extensively by governance and management and are available to all staff. However, the reporting may not be readily usable by all staff, given the current level of sophistication of the dashboards. The most effective dashboard was at the senior management level, where Open Polytechnic has been tracking achievement closely. This tracking has contributed to significantly increased learner achievement as measured by TEC EPI data by enabling monitoring of achievement levels. The manual tracking of progress and learner achievement in mental health and addiction programmes is clear but the same does not apply to foundation programmes such as Department of Corrections programmes.

Annual programme evaluation reviews are another important feature of self-assessment. Achievement is also reported through the annual programme evaluation reviews – some inconsistencies in data may be remedied by the better reporting tools.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

It is acknowledged that in open distance learning there is heavier investment in programme development up front than often occurs in more traditional methods of delivery. However, it is still important that the valued outcomes of programmes of study are evidenced to ensure that the outcomes planned for in programme

Final report

development are realised. There is potentially high value for learners in completing their courses and qualifications, but achievement of this is not always clearly realised or evidenced.

Open Polytechnic's own benchmark for meeting needs is continuous improvement in stakeholder satisfaction measured across learner experience from enrolment to graduate outcomes.

Open Polytechnic has expanded the tools it uses to collect information about valued outcomes (as recommended in the last EER), but more still needs to be known about employment outcomes for graduates (given that about 70 per cent of students are in employment), and other measures of the effect of the learning experience on longer-term and personalised outcomes for learners.

Open Polytechnic uses two key mechanisms to understand valued outcomes for learners, supplemented by graduate surveys and annual programme evaluation reviews: the annual Colmar Brunton survey and periodic BERL economic analyses of the survey data. Graduate surveys, course evaluations and feedback from industry – including through advisory committees – also contribute. Respondents to the Colmar Brunton survey valued the useful and meaningful knowledge and skills they learnt and believed these complemented and contributed to their daily workplace employment. In addition, the Colmar Brunton survey and BERL analysis showed that around 35 per cent of students gained an increase in salary as a result of their new qualification. In some cases, learners complete courses and qualifications to meet regulatory employment requirements such as for early childhood care, mental health and addiction, and real estate.

Distance learning particularly suits learners who are employed and those who have busy personal lives. Common sense suggests that an additional value of distance learning in these circumstances is that learners develop their cognitive abilities, for example self-management and learning how to learn, which are necessary attributes if they are to succeed in their learning and assessment. Soft or transferable skills were not clearly mapped, nor was there clear or consistent evidence that graduates actually gained such skills.

In some areas, learners gain or create new knowledge and skills which they share with their colleagues. Such learnings have the potential to support and contribute positively to family, community and iwi development and local and wider communities. As in any tertiary education organisation, achievement of qualifications can provide positive examples to others of success through study.

A high proportion (approximately 70 per cent) of Open Polytechnic students are already in part or full-time employment when they are studying. A smaller but still significant proportion (approximately 30 per cent) of students studying at Open Polytechnic at any time are not employed. For those who are not employed,

successful completions can be a route to employment. However, such valued outcomes are not always clearly evidenced by Open Polytechnic.

While the enhanced Colmar Brunton survey provides Open Polytechnic with some useful data, this information is not consistently supported at the programme level. The foundation programmes are not included because the students are not online. Valuable outcomes were apparent in some of the conversations the evaluators had with current learners and graduates. However, opportunities to triangulate this information, through other graduate and employer feedback, were limited.

Evidence from employers at programme level was generally sparse. However, Open Polytechnic did demonstrate that strong industry engagement to determine the needs of stakeholders generally occurs when new programmes are being developed. For example, extensive research in the sector was undertaken before developing the new Bachelor of Teaching and the postgraduate qualification in primary science teaching. Some programmes looked at through the focus areas had excellent ongoing engagement with stakeholders, while others had less effective systems in place.

The 2013 Colmar Brunton survey reported that, regardless of levels of satisfaction and the quality of their experience, most students appreciated the value of their qualification from Open Polytechnic:

‘The survey indicates that the vast majority of learners value their education with the OP highly. For example, close to 50 percent receive a tangible benefit, such as a pay rise or a promotion. Importantly 68 percent believe their employers value the qualification.’

However, the evaluation team considers that maximum use was not being made of such a rich source of feedback because the polytechnic puts more emphasis on student satisfaction feedback, and its own focus on EPIs does not include self-assessment of outcomes other than achievement.

The evaluation team believes that the advisory committees and industry for each discipline have a critical role in ensuring that the information provided by the Colmar Brunton survey and BERL with regard to employment and valued outcomes is supplemented by additional feedback. The team sees the graduate destination survey initiated by the academic board two years ago as an encouraging contributor to valuable information about a range of outcomes, and as a worthwhile practice at the programme level for all faculty and schools.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Open distance learning expands opportunities for education and training for students and industry by providing flexibility in time and place of study. It is recognised that students enrolling at Open Polytechnic value this and that it consequently influences the demographic characteristics of the student cohort (a higher proportion of older learners who are also in employment). Open distance learning gives learners flexibility around their employment and personal lives while enabling them to study and become qualified. The BERL analysis supports this view. The analysis also suggests that Open Polytechnic consider further research on this aspect, especially for students aged 20 to 24, the single largest age group. The successful focus on improving EPIs may have reduced fully open entry and enrolment, but this is in the interests of learners because it helps ensure they undertake appropriate programmes that they have a realistic opportunity of completing successfully and gaining a qualification. On the other hand, the termination of some programmes and courses with low EPIs may not have always been in the best interests of learners. There is potential tension between increasing online delivery to provide learners with the flexibility and convenience of this form of delivery, and students only being able to enrol in one course at a time. That said, students with a successful history of completing multiple courses concurrently are able to enrol in more than one course at a time, and open and closed course dates need to be taken into account. There is also the tension that Open Polytechnic faces of wanting to provide open courses anywhere, anytime, and the need to put tighter timeframes around programmes and courses to improve EPI results. Open Polytechnic is aware of these and other tensions and is addressing them on an as-needs basis.

Open Polytechnic identifies engagement with over 50 national organisations for the purposes of programme review. Open Polytechnic is proactive in engaging with stakeholders to develop new programmes and activities to match ever-changing needs. Examples include the Graduate Diploma in Primary Science Teaching, which is designed to meet the future needs of education providers in response to government priorities consistent with the Tertiary Education Strategy. Another example is the redevelopment of the National Certificate in Mental Health and Addiction Support. The Certificate in Designing and Facilitating E-learning matches internal as well as external needs. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders at the programme level is more variable in determining how well the programmes are matching the needs of stakeholders and how well planned outcomes are being achieved. The shift to online delivery and assessment has so far not necessarily meant enhanced online and e-learning. Some of these developments are in their

Final report

very early stages of implementation and require considerable further work and resources, which are being increasingly provided.

Open Polytechnic has developed pathway opportunities that enable learners to go on to further study. Examples include the review of programmes in the School of Educational Studies, which includes a newly developed pathway from NCEA level 2 to programmes at levels 3 and 4, to Bachelor's programmes. Mental health and addiction support offers programmes and qualifications at levels 3 and 4. The NZDipBus pathways to degree-level programmes and qualifications.

The redesign of the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) included bicultural elements to ensure the degree programme continued to meet the needs of Māori and Pasifika students, and simultaneously conformed to the philosophy of Te Whariki, the curriculum framework for early childhood education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The introduction of the Bachelor of Social Work provides an ideal opportunity for those already working in the sector, or for those aspiring to do so, to acquire higher-level knowledge and skills.

Open Polytechnic has a strong focus on Māori achievement through its Māori Office, which has provided a range of internal initiatives and the development of policies to guide and support Māori learner achievement. Key Māori staff have been appointed to Open Polytechnic governance and management bodies in order to understand and respond to Māori learners through targeted initiatives. It was apparent throughout the EER that Open Polytechnic is taking a multi-pronged approach to addressing Māori learner needs. Open Polytechnic is developing a longitudinal research project into Māori participation and achievement, including testing the assumption that Māori learn better 'kanohi ki te kanohi' (face-to-face) and in group learning environments. The EPI data from Open Polytechnic shows that achievement rates for Māori learners have been on an upward trend for four out of the past five years.

At the time of the EER visit there was no strategy for Pasifika learners. The EPI data shows that achievement rates for Pasifika learners had been increasing for four out of five years, the exception being a drop in course and qualification completions in 2013 when Open Polytechnic lost its student achievement component funding for programmes at levels 1-3. This resulted in cuts to some programmes that were being delivered in collaboration with community stakeholders, particularly for the Pasifika community. While some of the initiatives outlined in the Open Polytechnic investment plan have been implemented, they were not being monitored, articulated or coordinated across the organisation, and analysis of their impact was not clearly evident. Since the EER, a person with responsibility for Pasifika has been appointed and has drafted a Pasifika strategy.

Open Polytechnic has strong processes for the review, development and improvement of existing programmes and for researching, consulting and making the case for new programmes. The Open Polytechnic Strategy and Analysis team,

Final report

Colmar Brunton and BERL give useful feedback on which programmes are most popular, why students are attracted to them, how much students value them, and how well students rate them in terms of value for money. Faculty and schools also consult and report on existing programmes increasingly based on their own programme-specific self-assessment. Feedback is gained from direct conversations as well as surveys of stakeholders and learners. This provides valuable feedback which is used to improve programmes. For example, the evaluators were impressed with the thoroughness of the research and the industry consultative process for the development of the Bachelor of Social Work. On the other hand, the quality of the consultation with industry as part of the review and revision of the construction diplomas was lacking – the timing and visit reporting were limited in their value and effectiveness. Open Polytechnic currently works with six of the 12 ITOs, and this provides assurance that its programmes and activities are matching the needs of learners and other stakeholders in those industry areas.

In general, the annual programme evaluation reviews developed by programme leaders based on performance data and survey feedback provided by the quality and academic development unit, reflected variable learner, graduate, industry and other stakeholder consultation. Programme improvements based on the annual programme evaluation reviews can be made at any time, but the evaluators question the timeliness and value to the current programme of presenting the reviews – and capturing the valuable conversations with the board that ensue – in September or October, even though programme leaders can and do make changes beforehand. Further development of academic board initiatives, such as improving response rates to course evaluations, obtaining more information about graduate destinations, and employer feedback, would help Open Polytechnic gain more comprehensive information about how well programmes and courses match key stakeholder needs and the value of the outcomes.

The information that Open Polytechnic gathers from a variety and range of sources would be most effective when interconnected by collating, considering, analysing, discussing and using it. This would enable Open Polytechnic to ensure its programmes and activities better match the needs of learners and other stakeholders. Increasingly, ongoing and regular self-assessment activities should enable Open Polytechnic to be able to respond quickly, especially in vocational areas and at lower qualification levels, to changing needs in a contestable funding environment.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

Open distance teaching and learning are different to a face-to-face environment. It is critical that the learning materials and assessments are of the highest quality. To ensure this, Open Polytechnic has created the Education Solutions team which is responsible for the development of distance and online learning resources.

Members are specialists in such areas as educational design, technology, graphic design, editing, biculturalism and online testing. They work closely and effectively with teaching staff who were positive about their interactions and observed that they were challenged by the questions posed around a number of areas, including pedagogy and assessment in a highly professional distance learning environment.

Over 70 per cent of students responding to the Colmar Brunton survey rated their overall satisfaction with the learning materials as excellent or very good. Of perhaps most significance is that the Colmar Brunton survey shows consistent improvement in the quality of course materials over time in each of the 10 aspects, including the effectiveness of the resources, that students were asked about over a four-year period. This survey, combined with Open Polytechnic's own self-assessment and that of the individual Open Polytechnic schools, identifies the most well-received materials and those where there is clearly more work to be done. Education Solutions and teaching staff use this and other information, such as help desk information and teaching staff feedback, to continuously improve resources. The high quality of Open Polytechnic materials was recognised in 2013 by an Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials by the Commonwealth of Learning.³

Open Polytechnic has worked hard to take an effective approach to literacy and numeracy for its distance learners. Learning materials aim to be explicit and clear, and are designed to stand alone as much as possible for a learner's self-directed learning, comprehension and exploration of ideas in an open distance learning environment. This includes the goal of embedding literacy and numeracy to ensure clarity of materials for as wide a range of student abilities as possible, especially at levels 1-3. These are the intended strategies, but there were also examples where literacy and numeracy were not embedded and where materials did not match the literacy and numeracy needs of learners. Only a small number of learners assessed at steps 1-3 (as measured by the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool)

³ The Commonwealth of Learning is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

are being reassessed (28 per cent), but of these nearly 60 per cent have gained one step or more. Further analysis could support understanding of the effectiveness of the strategies implemented.

The Education Technology team is responsible for providing the platform and technology support for online learning. Members of this team are committed to their role in the development of the technology infrastructure that supports improving the students' online experience and their achievements. One of the team's key initiatives has been the development of an online marking system which has significantly improved the return of marked assessments and feedback to students. Other initiatives under development more recently are the student engagement tool, qualification planner, and tablet-based delivery initiatives. The student engagement tool, which is how the organisation evaluates the impacts of initiatives from the engagement strategy on learner achievement, is a new initiative which is less well developed than the online marking system, but it is being used increasingly by tutors in open courses. The Education Technology team also prepares and prints the hard-copy material where technological devices cannot be used. Even where the learning materials might be outstanding, Open Polytechnic has recognised that prompt tutor support as well as technical and general support services are still essential, and has continued to improve these aspects.

Open Polytechnic still packs and sends paper-based course materials to students, and this is the responsibility of the Logistics team. This includes blended programmes or courses that combine paper-based and online components, for example the National Certificate in Financial Services (Financial Advice), and where distance learning is complemented by face-to-face tutorial assistance, for example the foundation programmes with the Department of Corrections. While Open Polytechnic clearly adapts such programmes to better meet the needs of learners, it is committed to providing a technology platform to shift as much of the learning and assessment to online as soon as possible and practicable. Open Polytechnic is aware that, according to the most recent Colmar Brunton survey (2013), online was the preferred method for submitting assessments for the vast majority of students (72 per cent); 60 per cent of students preferred a combination of online, offline and print-based delivery of courses; and just 19 per cent of students preferred an online-only approach. Currently all provision in prisons is through paper-based materials as computers are not permitted in prisons. Online provision is available at only one site. Access to offline computer suites is available. Open Polytechnic would prefer students use tablets (rather than computers) in prisons in the future.

The quality of the learning at Open Polytechnic is the combined result of successful development and implementation of processes and materials as well as effective teaching and support by Open Polytechnic academic teaching staff and adjuncts. Adjuncts make a significant contribution to delivery, assessment and marking, and to moderation. They are responsible for their own professional development and

Final report

do not receive the same level of performance management and education-related professional development as Open Polytechnic permanent staff – they are often specialists and add considerable value, which could be even greater in some cases.

The most recent (2013) annual Colmar Brunton survey confirms increased satisfaction with the tutoring. This is significant because student/tutor interaction and support are important for all courses whether they are blended delivery or mainly online. Satisfaction (those that rated tutors ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’) increased from 67 per cent in 2011 to an all-time high of 75 per cent in 2013. The average level of satisfaction with five programmes exceeded 83 per cent, while for course materials the comparable figure was 71 per cent. Satisfaction measures included whether students would recommend Open Polytechnic and whether they think Open Polytechnic provides value for money. Such data shows encouraging improvement compared with previous results, but still leaves a question as to the reasons why 20 to 30 per cent of students are not as highly satisfied.

Open Polytechnic’s self-assessment includes – although not solely or exclusively – the Colmar Brunton survey, which provides feedback on the quality of the learning materials as well as the support provided by the tutors. The evaluation team in its conversations with staff noted evidence of tutors reflecting on their teaching strategies. The team also saw evidence of Open Polytechnic support for academic staff to acquire teaching or e-learning qualifications, including internally within the polytechnic. Open Polytechnic evaluates feedback and information from learners and other stakeholders. Tutors and programme leaders engage in this process on an ongoing basis and team leaders report to the academic board in the annual programme evaluation reviews. However, there is still insufficient evidence of systematic evaluation of the quality of teaching activities undertaken by the tutors themselves.

That said, learning is highly planned and structured, resources and activities engage learners as effectively as possible, and learners (a high proportion of whom are employed) have opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in their own workplaces.

The evaluation team is satisfied that assessment, whether online or paper-based, is valid, sufficient, fair and transparent, and that it provides learners (and tutors) with useful feedback. Across the focus areas, the evaluation team saw examples of internal and external moderation being used to improve assessments and teaching. Internal moderation processes have been reviewed and revised based on an external report that Open Polytechnic commissioned. Open Polytechnic has achieved significantly better external moderation results from NZQA and ITOs as well as degree monitoring reports since the previous EER. This reflects progress and improvement in the quality of assessments and assessment decisions. Early indications suggest that the shift to online marking has added strengths to these

processes, not only in the processing times but also in the quality of the comments provided to learners. Degree monitoring reports confirm effective delivery of degree programmes after they have been approved by NZQA.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

The provision of appropriate and accessible support is essential to engage and retain students in open distance learning, and in this context Open Polytechnic has implemented initiatives to further improve the guidance and support for learners, including: ongoing research into the 'student journey'; further development of the student service strategy; and the development of a student engagement tool.

Comprehensive information about programmes and courses is readily available online and by telephone from the time a prospective learner considers studying at Open Polytechnic. The organisation provides full advice to all students from the time they indicate a desire to enrol, and goes to considerable lengths to ensure that students who enrol have a realistic chance of succeeding. This includes explaining in detail what a programme or course entails and what previous background or experience is necessary, whether there are any prerequisites for entry, and any other information or advice that may be helpful. Enrolment usually also includes an application process which may include an initial interview for a first programme depending on the programme and learner. For lower qualification levels, the interview may be used to determine whether the learner has sufficient literacy or numeracy or English for Speakers of Other Languages knowledge and skills to succeed, or whether any additional help or support is needed. The improving effectiveness of this process is indicated by 70 per cent of students rating their satisfaction with the information, assistance and advice they received during their enrolment as excellent or very good, the ratings in both areas increasing by 1-2 per cent every year since 2010.

Open Polytechnic encourages better enrolment management processes and sequential rather than simultaneous enrolments to encourage and support success and progress. However, if learners show that they are succeeding well, they can enrol in more than one course at a time at the discretion of the programme leader or manager on a case-by-case basis. On the other hand, if students do not engage with the learning after Open Polytechnic has made every effort to ensure they have, the polytechnic will withdraw them more quickly than previously.

Open Polytechnic is continuing to develop student support covering the period from a student's initial enquiry to their successful completion. Student guidance and

Final report

support to date has included a range of initiatives as reported in greater detail elsewhere in this report. These initiatives include the development of a Māori strategy and a Māori Office, and functional improvements to the faculty office with its seven schools. Recent self-assessments of the library services and the learning centre have contributed to further improvement of student support. As noted, subsequent to the evaluation visit, a Pasifika advisor was employed and has developed a draft Pasifika strategy.

The improvements in learner guidance and support are seen as contributors to the Open Polytechnic's success in improving its EPIs and learner achievement in course and qualification completions in particular, and student completions and progressions. Improvements include the responsiveness of the Education Technology support team, the extension of help desk staffing hours, an improved logging-in system for students, better materials and assessments, quicker processing times, and for students who still receive paper-based materials, timely provision of the correct materials and writing support for new students for their first assessment. The Open Polytechnic Council-initiated student services strategy, which is focused on motivating students better towards success, has included completion of the recent development of an 'anytime-anywhere' online 'app' which students can use via a range of devices for enrolment, or to confirm their progress, plan programmes or courses or qualifications.

The annual Colmar Brunton survey provides feedback on how well learners consider they are guided and supported. Several aspects showed continued improvement in 2013: advice and assistance during enrolment, tutors' learning support, course materials, and the learning centre. For example, overall satisfaction with the tutors' learning support reached the highest point since 1998, with 75 per cent rating their main or most recent tutor's support as excellent or very good. Aspects that were most highly valued by students were feeling comfortable about contacting tutors, having up-to-date knowledge about courses, receiving constructive feedback, and clear requirements about assessment.

The library is rated very highly by the respondents who used the service (38 per cent). Of those students who used the learning centre (17 per cent in 2013, up from 14 per cent in 2012), over 60 per cent rated the services received as excellent or very good. Recent library and learning centre self-assessment activities have explored ways of increasing use of these resources. However, the Colmar Brunton survey shows that 76 per cent of the students who responded used the online campus in 2013, up from 70 per cent in 2012.

Supplementary ongoing feedback through the online campus, the help desk and other, similar avenues are likely to become even more effective as Open Polytechnic moves more of its programmes and courses online. Such feedback readily informs the Education Solutions and Education Technology teams, Logistics, the faculty and the Open Polytechnic schools, which are often able to

respond quite promptly depending on the opportunities for improvement raised. In 2012, the help desk extended its hours to cater to student demand. This move was helpful because it made services more accessible to the online learners.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is **Good**.

In order to fulfill its role as an open distance learning provider, Open Polytechnic has implemented a disaggregated business model with specialist units operating at each stage of programme development and delivery. This model has been adopted to ensure that its provision is scalable and can be distributed effectively and consistently. Governance and management at Open Polytechnic are very aware of the importance of the EPIs and how student performance is one of the factors – a very important one – that influence the EPIs, and have been part of the initiatives taken to improve them. The Council initiated an EPI improvement strategy about four years ago, and EPIs have tracked steadily up since then, especially course and qualification completions. The Council continues to track course and qualification completion EPIs, which are a kind of proxy for qualifications completions against targets, based on regular updates from the Strategy and Analysis team. The team makes an important contribution to how well governance and management are informed and how effectively governance and management support learner achievement.

The use of mainly quantitative as well as some qualitative data has contributed to many of the changes that Open Polytechnic has implemented and has underpinned the very successful improvement in learner achievement. The Colmar Brunton surveys and BERL reports provide useful information about how well Open Polytechnic programmes are meeting industry and other stakeholder needs. However, increasingly regular engagement by the Open Polytechnic schools – using mainly Open Polytechnic online survey tools – with learners, graduates, employers and industry is vital to determining how well programmes are meeting the needs of learners and other stakeholders. Management uses a dashboard regularly to continually monitor student achievement progress against clear targets. Open Polytechnic is working hard to improve its data management system to ensure real-time data is available to all programmes. Currently, not all programme teams are making use of this data, although new dashboards and reporting tools will make this easier.

The Council is keenly aware of the importance of learner achievement, including that of Māori and Pasifika learners. There is positive evidence that initiatives such

Final report

as the Māori strategy and Māori Office – which governance and management have supported to improve Māori achievement – are successful. At the evaluation visit, similar initiatives were not evident for Pasifika – the strategy was developed after the visit. Management keeps track of Māori and Pasifika learner achievement, which has improved over the past four to five years (Pasifika did not improve in 2013), although it is unclear how significantly and to what extent this has been a consequence of a clear strategy rather than a shift in numbers. Programme leaders present their annual programme evaluation reviews to the Open Polytechnic's academic board. In general, the programme reviews are honest, open and valuable, but the evaluators consider that they could be strengthened by more robust stakeholder feedback and an earlier reporting timeframe, although the programme leaders can and do make changes before the annual programme evaluation reviews are presented.

It is healthy that Open Polytechnic is using a range of self-assessment tools, for example the State Services Commission survey of staff engagement. It is notable that since 2011, staff engagement has increased significantly. Open Polytechnic staff engagement now compares favourably with most of the public service on almost all measures. It intends to retain use of the survey for time series benchmarking, but the Council has suggested using another, simpler, five-point survey in addition to better determine staff engagement and how to improve it. Open Polytechnic also uses a tool to evaluate the chief executive's effectiveness, and another tool to evaluate the performance of the Council and the effectiveness of its working relationship with the chief executive. The academic board conducted a survey to determine graduate outcomes last year (2013) and the two years before that. The evaluators believe that an external perspective on governance and management may supplement and enhance some of the self-assessment activities.

There is not yet sufficient gathering of and engagement with outcomes data and self-assessment to supplement what is known through the Colmar Brunton surveys and BERL reports. The evaluators commend those Open Polytechnic schools that have done this or intend to do so, and the Council and chief executive for their intentions to gather additional information about staff engagement.

Members of governance and management are aware of the importance of the quality of the teaching in an open distance learning environment. The academic board also oversees professional development and a competency framework for academic staff. The polytechnic is aware that it is not yet meeting its own targets for teaching staff with regard to adult education or e-learning qualifications, and is planning to address this. However, the board has supported the development of an Ako teaching strategy. Components of this strategy are not new for some tutors, and it aligns with their good practice; for others it is setting a framework for improvement. The focus on moderation has also seen improvements in the external moderation record.

Governance and management and the Strategy and Analysis team all support educational achievement appropriate to their functions and are well connected in this regard. Consequently, the purpose and direction of the polytechnic are clear and shared by staff the evaluators spoke to during the EER. New initiatives to support achievement are effectively scoped and allocated to support learning, teaching and research, especially in the development of online programmes, courses and software. Staff the evaluators spoke to feel valued and supported and staff recruitment is effective. However, staff development, and staff participation in research, could be better. The polytechnic is aware of this and is developing ways of developing and improving these areas.

Open Polytechnic is balancing innovation – where there is considerable opportunity to do more based on rapidly changing technologies – with continuity, such as continuing paper-based learning, teaching and assessment. The evaluators appreciate that Open Polytechnic needs to involve both staff and learners and provide appropriate resources when it makes changes. Based on the polytechnic's current structure of Education Solutions, Education Technology and Logistics and improving self-assessment, the evaluators are confident that Open Polytechnic will continue to make further ongoing and effective improvements.

Focus Areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

Council is fully supportive of the chief executive and senior management and is confident that it is well informed by the chief executive on all areas within the Council's function. Council members interviewed by the evaluators were all positive about the growth and future prospects of Open Polytechnic and felt the Council had a good balance of expertise within its ranks. They felt very positively about the outcomes of the Colmar Brunton surveys and BERL reports, which they fully understood and valued.

The Council is aware of the importance of Māori and Pasifika learner achievement. Management keeps track of Māori learner achievement, which has improved significantly as a consequence of the Māori strategy and Māori Office. This is not yet the case for Pasifika learners, where strategic development is at an earlier stage.

Open Polytechnic is committed to stakeholder engagement, but the timing and quality of this is quite variable. The evaluators found effective research informing programme development and review, which included engagement with a range of stakeholders in areas such as the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE), Graduate Diploma in Primary Science, and e-learning as well as real estate qualifications and the Bachelor of Social Work. However, the nature and timing of industry stakeholder engagement and reporting on construction raised concerns as it appeared to be ad hoc, with little quality stakeholder feedback presented as part of programme review.

The evaluators saw evidence of Open Polytechnic using an increasing range of self-assessment tools related to staff engagement, the chief executive's effectiveness, and the performance of the Council itself. As mentioned, the academic board conducted a survey to determine graduate outcomes last year (2013) and the two years before that. However, there was a lack of external perspective to enhance some of these self-assessment activities. There is not yet sufficient gathering and analysis of outcomes and self-assessment data to supplement what is known through the Colmar Brunton surveys and BERL reports. Some schools are systematically analysing, interpreting and evaluating their performance, while others intend to do so going forward. The Council and chief

executive intend to gather additional information about staff engagement and Council performance using additional tools.

Open Polytechnic has sometimes not anticipated and responded to change as proactively and quickly as it might, for example in extending online in-house service support hours. However, Open Polytechnic extended its help desk hours in 2012 and has provided 24/7 access through a call centre, which is helpful support for open distance learners. Open Polytechnic is balancing innovation, where there is considerable opportunity based on rapidly changing technologies, with continuity, which includes continuing paper-based learning, teaching and assessment. However, the evaluators appreciate that Open Polytechnic needs to involve both staff and learners, and to provide sufficient resources when it makes even more radical changes than at present.

Being open and flexible is important to meeting learner needs. Council is particularly aware of this within an open distance learning environment and is looking ahead to opportunities for online technology, especially when the outcomes of TRoQ are clearer. Council has also undertaken to find an alternative funding stream for future developments. Based on the polytechnic's initiatives since the previous EER, and the current structure of Education Solutions, Education Technology and Logistics, and ongoing improvement of self-assessment, the evaluators are confident that Open Polytechnic will continue to make further ongoing and effective progress as a distance learning provider.

2.2 Focus area: Education Solutions

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

Education Solutions is the team responsible for the development of distance and online learning resources. The team includes educational designers, technology solution advisors, graphic designers, editors, a bicultural reviewer, and reviewers and technical testers, who work with faculty staff to develop/redevelop educational programmes. The quality of learning resources is enhanced by the positive relationship that Education Services fosters with faculty and teaching staff. This provides a professional environment where preconceptions about teaching and assessment can be challenged and tested in order to best meet learner needs.

The high quality of materials produced by Open Polytechnic was recognised in 2013 by an Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials by the Commonwealth of Learning. Additionally, over 70 per cent of students responding to the Colmar Brunton survey rated their overall satisfaction with the learning materials as excellent or very good. The consistent improvement of the quality of course materials is evident from the survey which, over a four-year period, shows a

Final report

steady improvement in each of 10 aspects students were asked to rate. However, it would be useful for Open Polytechnic to identify the reasons for the 30 per cent who are not as highly satisfied and to address them.

Education Solutions ensures that course materials are produced to effectively match the needs of learners and other stakeholders (for example, industry and government) by undertaking a significant amount of consultation and planning before development begins. The result of this work and its expected benefits are documented, and the design, use of technology, pedagogy and assessment strategies are presented with a rationale for each. The documentation is used to guide development, and achievement of the expected benefits is monitored. Throughout the development there are effective quality assurance processes for new materials before release to the students. When online courses go live, Education Solutions undertakes virtual observation to review assumptions about learners and the teaching. This information, together with a range of other feedback systems (student surveys, help desk traffic, student support, teaching staff feedback), is effectively used to improve future developments. Teaching staff indicated that efficient systems are in place to enable them to make timely changes to materials to ensure accuracy, and that the materials reflect industry practice.

Education Solutions staff are clearly focused on institutional priorities such as student achievement, and operate in an environment that values and encourages communication and reflection leading to robust self-assessment. Self-assessment would be strengthened by implementation of systematic methods of gathering feedback from other staff and developing effectiveness indicators for Education Solutions.

2.3 Focus area: Education Technology; Logistics

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

The Education Technology team provides the technology platform and technology support for Open Polytechnic. The Logistics Centre packs and sends paper-based course materials to students.

Education Technology staff are focused on the achievement of the polytechnic's goals and can clearly articulate their role and their performance in processes to achieve these goals. Consequently, they are able to provide insights and services fundamental to the development of the technology infrastructure that has supported improving student achievement and student perceptions of Open Polytechnic.

Open Polytechnic has implemented several large projects that have had a direct and positive impact on the student experience and the institution's performance. Education Technology has had and continues to have a critical and effective role in

Final report

these developments. Examples include the development of an online marking system that has significantly improved the return of marked assessments and feedback to students, the student engagement tool, qualifications planner, and tablet-based delivery initiatives. The tensions between innovation and the need to maintain continuity are effectively managed. An important mechanism for this is the business information forum, which recommends improvements to the technology systems.

Students are well supported by the Education Technology support team. The team is responsive to student needs. For example, the team has installed a new call logging system, and information from it has improved their support performance. The support team is a strong advocate for students and meets regularly with other staff from Education Technology to provide feedback on student issues and follow up on unresolved issues.

Education Technology and Logistics are focused on improving the quality of the student experience and ultimately student outcomes, through providing better course materials and ensuring students receive the correct course materials within set timeframes. Better-quality course materials and increased timeliness of production have been achieved through improved systems. Logistics has identified how its activities have affected student achievement, and has significantly reduced the error rate in the paper-based packs sent to students.

Self-assessment processes are robust, authentic and continuous in both Education Technology and Logistics. It is clear that improving the student experience and achievement is a significant motivating factor. Feedback from a variety of sources is effectively used daily to inform self-assessment.

2.4 Focus area: Education Programme: National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 3); Certificate in Early Childhood Practice (Level 4); Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) (Level 7)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

The educational performance and processes and practices for the programmes in this focus area are varied. For the largest programme, the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE), achievement and outcomes are strong, supported by excellent teaching and learning support. For the smaller certificate programmes, particularly the national certificate programme, strong processes around teaching and learner guidance are not as clear, and evidence of value for learners is minimal. In reaching judgements about performance, this contrasting evidence had to be carefully weighted.

Course completion rates have improved for two of the programmes looked at in this focus area, and this reflects a commitment to supporting learners to achieve (see Table 3).

Table 3. Course completion rates, 2010-2013				
	2010 %	2011 %	2012 %	2013 %
Bachelor of Teaching (ECE)	74	86	91	92
Certificate in Early Childhood Practice	-	-	70	78
National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care	51	62	61	58

The Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) has strong achievement, with course completion rates increasing from 74 per cent in 2010, when the programme was first offered, to 92 per cent in 2013. Achievement rates for Māori and Pasifika students in this programme are comparable to other students. Learners are less successful at completing courses in the National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care. Course completion rates have remained steady but, at 58 per cent, are below Open Polytechnic's targets for programmes at levels 1-3. While the participation rate for Māori has increased for this programme, course completion rates sit significantly lower at 46 per cent, although this has increased from a low of 29 per cent in 2010.

In an attempt to address low course completions, this programme has been redeveloped and new entry criteria put in place. Overall, the performance rates for the lower-level programmes are significantly lower than for the degree, and Open Polytechnic is not clearly aware of why at this stage. The differences in achievement rates have possible future implications for the degree if Open Polytechnic wishes to develop pathways as well as accept students from outside these lower-level programmes.

The value of outcomes for learners enrolled in the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) is evident, with 92 per cent of respondents employed in a relevant context and 92 per cent considering their degree to be relevant to their work. This programme benefits from strong links with industry stakeholders, through links with associate tutors, an advisory committee, EDUCANZ (formerly the New Zealand Teachers' Council), external moderation and monitors.

The value for learners on the certificate programmes is less clear, although there is evidence that 20 level 4 graduates have progressed to the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE). In addition, 35 learners from the newly developed NCEA pathway have enrolled in the National Certificate in Early Education and Care. Anecdotally, it is understood that these learners are doing well. The School of Education Studies has recognised that better information is required and has set up a database to

Final report

track graduates from the certificate programmes more effectively. Comments from the small number of learners who respond to the online course evaluations attest to the value and knowledge they have gained from being on the programme.

A key feature of these programmes is that they match the needs of learners who want to study part-time and at a distance, with flexibility around their other commitments. There is good evidence of programme staff developing strong links with community organisations. For example, the level 4 certificate, first delivered in 2011, was developed in partnership with the New Zealand Home-based Early Childhood Education Association and Barnardos, with a strong focus on building on learners' existing knowledge and extending their knowledge of, for example, Te Whariki (the early childhood education core curriculum document), home-based care and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Across the programme there is a strong emphasis on Te Ao Māori, with the programmes being rewritten with a bicultural framework in mind. The courses aim to strengthen students' knowledge and understanding of te reo and tikanga. There is good evidence from the student evaluations that the noho marae, attended by all Bachelor's students, is a transformative and positive experience.

Teaching in the Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) is strong, with the learning materials developed with the support of the Education Solutions team and supplemented by noho marae and workshops. Guided by the new Ako teaching and learning strategy, there is evidence of excellent assessment practice. Regional lecturers guide and support local learners through their degree. A range of approaches to gathering feedback ensures that the stakeholder and student voice is strong. For the national certificate programme, while the programme leader is responsive to all issues that arise, the systematic monitoring and understanding of effective teaching and support is less evident, where only a small number of adjunct faculty are qualified in adult learning or teaching, and the response rate to course evaluations is very low.

Since 2009 the school has focused a lot of attention on refreshing its suite of programmes. The Bachelor of Teaching (ECE) was launched in 2010, the Certificate in Early Childhood Practice (Level 4) was launched in 2012, and the National Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 3) was extensively redeveloped. This refreshing of the curriculum has required extensive stakeholder engagement and gives the evaluation team confidence that the programmes, including strong learner pathways, have been developed to match learner needs. While the degree programme is performing strongly, and is informed by ongoing, systematic, evidence-based self-review, the certificate programmes' outcomes are less clear. Learner feedback and feedback from community partners is not being gathered in a robust way, and therefore strengths and gaps in programme design and delivery are not fully understood. It is a positive sign that some of these gaps in understanding, particularly with respect to

learner outcomes, have been recognised by the school and outlined as a focus for the future.

2.5 Focus area: Foundation programmes with Department of Corrections

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Adequate**.

This joint initiative with the Department of Corrections began in 2013 and is designed to enable prisoners to achieve NCEA level 2. This initiative represents a high proportion of the Open Polytechnic's provision of foundation programmes. Members of the evaluation team visited Rimutaka Prison, which is the only site where an Open Polytechnic tutor is delivering the material. There were 110 learners enrolled with Open Polytechnic at this site in 2013. The other 16 prison sites have blended delivery through a third party. The programmes are not the same as those delivered in the community and they are not pure distance delivery. The learners are some of the most disengaged and disadvantaged learners in New Zealand, with over two-thirds of them with reading skills below Step 4 of the learning progressions, the minimum level at which most learners can productively engage with paper-based, pure distance stand-alone study.

Determining accurate course completion rates to date is complicated by open courses, rolling enrolments and prisoner movement. Course completion rates are approximately 70 per cent. Anecdotal evidence from Department of Corrections staff and feedback from learners indicates that learners are improving their well-being and learning useful skills. The measurement of literacy and numeracy gains is administered on paper⁴ by a third party contracted by the Department of Corrections. Anecdotal feedback from the Department of Corrections and Open Polytechnic staff indicates that learners are improving their literacy and numeracy abilities. However, more robust information would be helpful to learners and staff of both institutions.

The desired outcome of this programme is for learners to continue study in trades or to pathway to other education and/or training and/or employment. The programme is a component in the government's aim to reduce re-offending within one year of release by 25 per cent by 2017. To date, little measurable information is available about how this foundation programme is contributing to that target. This is partly because of a lag in results for prisoners. For example, prisoners need to complete a rehabilitation programme, be released, and then be assessed 12

⁴ Many prisoners are not allowed access to computers or electronic resources.

months later. Department of Corrections staff are reporting improved behaviour of prisoners who are enrolled on the programme.

Open Polytechnic has adapted existing print-based delivery material for this programme because some prisoners are forbidden access to computers and other electronic resources.⁵ Some of the material – which related to literacy and was viewed by the evaluators – and comments by at least one learner and tutors show that the material requires further work to match the needs of prisoners.

Delivery was originally envisaged to be cohort-based in each prison/unit. Open Polytechnic has since found that because of high levels of prisoner movement, and the fact that learners progress at different rates, programmes have been individualised, i.e. two-hour per week tutorials that are mostly individual, and small group coaching.

The programme is delivered via print-based media supported by teaching/coaching staff attached to each correctional facility. When the programme started, Open Polytechnic was required, as a condition of the contract, to work with a third-party provider that would provide teaching/coaching services in all facilities apart from Rimutaka. Open Polytechnic has found this arrangement to be unsatisfactory and difficult to monitor as it creates an extra layer of management in an environment where communication is difficult anyway. Feedback from learners about the quality of teaching and their experience has been difficult and unreliable as it first has to pass through the third-party contractor then to the Department of Corrections before being made available to the polytechnic. At the time of the EER, Open Polytechnic had negotiated out of the third-party contract and was advertising for staff to be attached to each correctional facility throughout New Zealand and reporting directly to the Open Polytechnic head of school. Open Polytechnic management is confident that this new arrangement will improve teaching.

Workbooks are well set out visually to guide learners. A programme and student advisor assigned to the foundation team is available to answer queries from coaches or learners, but only the coaches interact directly with the learners in prison. However, many prisoners do not have access to telephones (or they use their allocated telephone time to communicate with family), so it is difficult for prisoners to access support between classes. The resulting frustration was evident from one of the three learners interviewed. This is a difficult challenge for Open Polytechnic to address since neither the prisoners nor the polytechnic have very much control or flexibility around facilities, timetables or contact opportunities.

Open Polytechnic sees the foundation programme with the Department of Corrections as one of its 'flagship' programmes and is committed to seeing it

⁵ Open Polytechnic and the Department of Corrections are in discussion about the use of electronic tablets for selected learners.

succeed. In an environment where there are many unpredictable challenges, often outside of Open Polytechnic's control, and where Open Polytechnic is expected to meet all key performance indicator targets in relation to course and qualification completions, this is an ambitious undertaking.

2.6 Focus area: National Certificate in Mental Health and Addiction Support (Level 4)

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

The current programme began in March 2013, so it was not yet possible to determine completions for the 18-month programme. The previous programme will cease in December 2014. Successful course and qualification completions of the previous programme remained consistent over 2009-2011, with a slight increase in 2012. Completions in 2012 were 79 per cent (Māori, 76 per cent and Pasifika, 74 per cent; this was a total of 405 successful and 25 not successful).

Open Polytechnic and the EER team are confident that achievement will continue to improve. This confidence is based on several evidence-based improvements, the major one being the new programme. The school identified the lowest-achieving courses in 2011 and 2012, and redeveloped new courses as well as a new programme which better suits part-time and full-time workers. The redevelopment included improved learning materials, more robust assessment and moderation through engagement with the Ako learning and teaching strategy, micro-monitoring and analysis of learner achievement, and better student support. The management and staff of the school take a multi-pronged approach to learner achievement, using its own dashboard to track learner achievement.

The programme manager and tutors have worked closely with Education Solutions and the cultural advisor over the past 12 months, and feedback has shown that learners find the materials interesting. They value competency-based assessment because it effectively confirms their learning, and they also find that Moodle online software enhances their chances of successful completion as it is an active teaching tool. Electronic submissions of assessments and online marking systems support student achievement – the swift turnaround from submission to receipt of marked assignments is seen as a significant benefit for both learners and tutors.

The programme delivery manager, programme and student advisor, tutor coordinator and adjunct tutors provide very effective guidance and support for their learners. They provide useful and timely information about the programme and courses at the start, and give early notice of due dates for assessments, which allows learners to schedule their work and study appropriately. Learners are encouraged to enrol in one course at a time to ensure they complete their courses,

Final report

but the programme manager reviews this practice on a case-by-case basis. Following up all learners within the first two weeks of enrolment and using a specialised colour-coded spreadsheet, with the information held on Integrator software, provides a live running record of all interactions and the progress of all learners at a glance.

As all learners are either employed or working in supervised placements throughout their programme, the programme manager and staff consult regularly with a wide range of stakeholders. Learners are supported by experienced, qualified and skilled workers in the field. The delivery of the programme by adjunct tutors is a real strength because they are all specialists and subject matter experts. The programme manager closely monitors student achievement; liaises with the appropriate adjunct tutors on learner and pre- and post-assessment moderation queries; moderates the feedback on scripts to ensure learners are given positive and constructive feedback which supports their learning; and uses moderation to make changes to learning content and assessment questions. The programme manager and tutor gave positive feedback about the Careerforce-facilitated meetings held twice a year, based on the opportunities they provide not only for improving assessment and moderation practices but also for professional development and inputs to TRoQ.

Despite the challenges of having three different programme leaders within a 12-month period, effective leadership and management and the commitment and abilities of staff have enabled the mental health programme to continue without compromising the quality of delivery. Recent developments have included the recruitment of Māori and Pasifika adjuncts. The Māori adjunct, who is also the cultural advisor for the programme, can provide additional support based on experience conducting district health board audits. The advisor and Māori learners see the potential of the national qualification to support meeting the demand in Christchurch for a service that is kaupapa Māori-based. In addition, all learners are becoming more aware of the potential of a career in the mental health sector – there are pathways to psychology and counselling studies and learners are able to progress to a level 6 diploma from 2014.

The combination of learning, application of knowledge and skills in the workplace under supervision, competency-based assessment, supervisor feedback, critical self-reflection by learners of their own abilities, and the support of Open Polytechnic staff gives the evaluators confidence in the quality of learner achievement and value of the outcomes of this programme. Open Polytechnic intends to survey year 1 course learners and stakeholders, as well as graduates, to provide more timely and more specific feedback than the Colmar Brunton surveys or BERL reports. This will support understanding of the value of the mental health programme and enable Open Polytechnic to make further ongoing evidence-based improvements.

Final report

2.7 Focus area: Education programme: New Zealand Diploma in Business

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

	2009 %	2010 %	2011 %	2012 %	2013 %
All learners	64	67	76	82	83
Māori	45	46	66	71	75
Pasifika	32	42	48	62	52
Under-25s	54	64	75	78	79

Achievement for learners in this programme has been steadily increasing, and in 2013 was on par with national averages. As can be seen in Table 4, Māori rates of course completion have risen steadily from a low of 45 per cent in 2009. This increase in achievement can be attributed to concerted efforts by staff to ensure improved Māori learner engagement and support. However, achievement for Pasifika learners is more of a concern. While achievement rates have improved, the consistently lower achievement rates for Pasifika could not be explained. It was difficult to understand the true rate of qualification completions, for while the overall EPI data shows rates increasing sharply to 90 per cent in 2013, these figures need to be understood in the context of a significant drop in participation.

Learner feedback indicates that students are gaining useful skills and knowledge that can be immediately applied to their work context. There is significant value evident for the learners who are successful at achieving the diploma. Graduates have attested to the value of the programme, with 98 per cent of those who responded to the survey either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the qualification has been useful and relevant to employment. Further value is evident in the significant number of learners who have taken up the new opportunity to staircase to the Bachelor of Business programme.

Most students are studying part-time and are in employment, and the flexible delivery matches their needs. Programme staff are actively engaged in professional development relevant to their subject specialities, and are involved in the TRoQ which will shape future business qualifications at levels 4-6. Consequently, lecturers maintain currency and reflect this in the case studies and other teaching material. Feedback from learners is generally positive and any issues raised are used to inform course improvements. In an attempt to better match the needs of Pasifika learners, a new partnership arrangement with a private

training organisation has been established, although it is too soon to know whether this will improve achievement.

This programme has significantly improved engagement and support for learners. Lecturers are more active at calling and emailing learners who have not made contact, and referrals to student support are common. Working with the learning support centre has meant that all new learners are phoned by peer mentors to encourage them on their journey, and they are also eligible for writing assistance. Programme advisors have been more active in this programme, steering first-time learners to an appropriate level or course.

Teaching is effective and guided and informed by the new Ako teaching and learning strategy. Almost two-thirds of the lecturing staff are engaged with or have completed either an adult learning or e-learning qualification. Moderation results show the programme performs well in comparison with national data, and this reflects strong internal moderation processes that ensure validity and consistency in assessments.

This programme is being managed well, and it is a positive sign that a programme leader has been stable in the position for over a year. The head of school has a high number of staff who report directly to her, although the evaluation team did not see evidence that this was causing problems. Improving achievement for all learners, including Māori and Pasifika, is also an ongoing challenge. While the programme is responsive to feedback gathered from learners, response rates to online surveys are low. Finding new approaches to gather rich feedback from learners and their employers could support the development of current and future programmes.

2.8 Focus area: Assessment

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

Strong assessment moderation processes across the programmes viewed by the evaluation team give confidence that learning is robustly assessed. All programmes, guided by an assessment policy, use a mix of internal and external pre- and post-assessment moderation to ensure clarity and consistency. External moderation by ITOs and NZQA reflects progress and improvement in the quality of assessments and decisions. The evaluation team saw good evidence that feedback from both internal and external moderation was being used to improve assessment and, in some cases, teaching.

While a number of newly developed programmes have well-articulated generic or work-ready learner outcomes that are being assessed through the curriculum, the work-ready and related skills themselves are not otherwise being deliberately

Final report

assessed or reported. While significant work has been done on embedding literacy and numeracy into programmes at levels 1-3, the evaluation of how effective this has been is still at the development stage. It is positive to see the alignment of assessment with clearly articulated graduate profiles in the polytechnic's newly developed programmes.

There is good evidence that Open Polytechnic is working to match the needs of learners more effectively with respect to assessment. The shift to online marking has been a key strategy across Open Polytechnic, and both staff and students report the effectiveness of this new process. The Colmar Brunton survey confirms that the timeliness of receiving marked assignments has improved. Another shift is the move away from unit standard-based courses with multiple assessment tasks towards integrated assessment that incorporates a range of learning outcomes. The evaluation team saw a range of examples where students gave feedback, asking for greater clarity with assessment tasks, and this feedback was responded to.

Shifts in assessment practice are being steered by the Ako teaching and learning strategy. This strategy is guided by the principles of Whakapiri (engagement), Whakamarama (enlightenment) and Whakamana (empowerment). In a number of courses there has been a change to using an early graded formative assessment to give the students useful feedback and early confidence to build on. It was also noted that new degree programmes had clearly articulated assessment frameworks that incorporated a range of approaches, including formative assessment for learning, and peer and self-assessment. These examples align with the principles of Ako articulated in the teaching and learning strategy. There is ongoing work to ensure the consistency of good assessment practice across the organisation.

Assessment has been a key focus for the senior management team at Open Polytechnic. Key strategies include the shift to online marking and the audit and revision of moderation processes. The shift to online marking required a significant amount of work to achieve 100 per cent of trimesterised courses using the system by the end of 2013. Teaching staff reported favourably on the support they received to achieve this goal. The assessment policy is currently under review, and this will be an excellent opportunity to share the good practice that is evident, particularly in the frameworks that have been developed for new degree programmes. This focus on assessment at all layers of the organisation gives the evaluation team confidence that assessment at Open Polytechnic is valid, sufficient, fair and consistent, providing students and tutors with useful feedback for learning.

2.9 Focus area: Māori and Pasifika and non-Māori and non-Pasifika achievement and support

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Good**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Good**.

The EPI data from Open Polytechnic shows that achievement rates for both Māori and Pasifika learners have been on an upward trend for four out of the past five years, the exception being a drop in course and qualification completions in 2013 when Open Polytechnic lost its student achievement component funding for level 1-3 programmes. This resulted in a cut to some programmes being delivered in collaboration with community stakeholder providers, particularly Pasifika providers. Open Polytechnic's focus on foundation programmes for the Department of Corrections, using residual level 1-2 funding, actually enabled higher participation of Māori learners at these levels.

The following tables show the progress made and the lower-level exceptions referred to.

Table 5. Māori educational performance, 2010-2013 (%)								
	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	CC	QC	CC	QC	CC	QC	CC	QC
Levels 1-3	38	19	54	43	68	80	74	63
Levels 4 and above	50	23	63	40	70	69	74	70
CC – course completion QC – qualification completion								
Table 6. Pasifika educational performance, 2010-2013 (%)								
	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	CC	QC	CC	QC	CC	QC	CC	QC
Levels 1-3	53	34	73	61	74	90	67	68
Levels 4 and above	48	18	61	46	72	60	70	66
CC – course completion QC – qualification completion								

Tables 5 and 6 show that the course and qualification completion improvements are significant at levels 1-3 and levels 4 and above.

The following table shows how Māori and Pasifika course and qualification completions compare with non-Māori and non-Pasifika.

Table 7. Educational performance comparisons, 2010-2013 (%)								
	2010		2011		2012		2013	
	CC	QC	CC	QC	CC	QC	CC	QC
Māori	46	22	59	41	69	71	74	67
Pasifika	51	27	69	56	74	81	68	67
Non-Māori, non-Pasifika	68	36	76	63	83	79	82	83
Gap with Māori	22	14	17	22	14	8	8	16
Gap with Pasifika	17	9	7	7	9	-2	14	16
CC – course completion QC – qualification completion								

Table 7 shows that progress in course and qualification completions is significant. However, it also shows that there is still a gap between Māori student achievement, Pasifika student achievement, and non-Māori and non-Pasifika student achievement, as measured by course completion and qualification completion EPIs. The gap has narrowed in Māori student achievement, particularly in course completions, the most reliable EPI indicator.

Open Polytechnic has a strong focus on Māori achievement through its Māori Office (Te Kura Wānanga) which was opened in 2011. Te Kura Wānanga has been guided by the recommendations made in two Te Tiriti o Waitangi audits in 2006 and 2011. Te Kura Wānanga has implemented many of the recommendations made through the provision of a range of internal initiatives and the development of policies to guide and support Māori learner achievement. The two strategy documents used to underpin the internal initiatives are Te Mahere Rautaki Māori (2013) – Iwi Participation Strategy, and Ako Teaching and Learning Strategy 2010-2013.

The recruitment of Māori staff to key positions – including at executive, management, Council, academic board and academic programme evaluation committee levels – over the past three years is a concrete result of a committed and concerted effort to understand and respond to Māori learners through the provision of targeted initiatives. Key staff positions include dedicated Māori lecturers teaching tikanga and te reo in the School of Education, through to a Māori educational designer employed in the Education Solutions team, and a Māori analyst who is part of the Strategy and Analysis team. Open Polytechnic is taking a multi-pronged approach to addressing Māori learner needs.

Open Polytechnic is developing a longitudinal research project, partly funded by Ako Aotearoa, on Māori participation and achievement in distance learning. One

Final report

area of particular interest is testing the assumption that Māori learn better 'kanohi ki te kanohi' (face-to-face) and in group learning environments.

Loss of funding for the level 1 and 2 programmes was the reason for lower participation by Pasifika at these levels. Based on what it knows about Pasifika participation and achievement, Open Polytechnic has identified a need to have a separate Pasifika support area. A new staff member – appointed before the EER – began work after the conclusion of the EER on-site visit, and a Pasifika strategy for the polytechnic has been developed. During the EER visit, there was no evidence presented of collective reporting or analysis of Pasifika learners as a distinct cohort other than EPI achievement data. It is understood this omission will be addressed through the Pasifika strategy.

Teaching staff in several schools (Foundation programmes, Mental Health and Addiction, Social Work, Education), were aware of and had embedded the Ako teaching and learning strategy in their own practice and were able to articulate where and how they did so. For example, the Pouhere (Māori lecturer) oversees and assists with the implementation of bicultural components across the School of Education. The school employs a number of culturally competent adjunct lecturers to meet the needs of Māori and Pasifika learners.

The evaluation team is well satisfied that Open Polytechnic is providing, and is in the process of embedding, relevant and meaningful cultural initiatives to raise the achievement levels of Māori learners, in particular at both strategic and operational levels, and with full support from governance and management.

The evaluation team is well satisfied with the extent of the support provided by Open Polytechnic to non-Māori and non-Pasifika, and available to all students regardless of ethnicity. This includes the library and learning centre – recent self-assessments of these respective services have contributed to further improvement of student support at Open Polytechnic. Student support also includes engagement strategies and initiatives such as the improved management of enrolments to ensure as much as possible that students succeed. Further comments as to achievement and support and the relationship between the two are made throughout this report, including but not solely or exclusively key evaluation question 5.

Recommendations

NZQA recommends that Open Polytechnic of New Zealand:

- Gather further information and reflect on forms of learner achievement that is more programme-specific about the value of the outcomes to learners and other key stakeholders such as employers and graduates.
- Ensure that annual programme evaluation reviews consistently include the use of a range of stakeholder feedback.
- Provide effective ways of monitoring performance and professional development as appropriate for Open Polytechnic tutors and regional or adjunct tutors.
- Extend literacy and numeracy testing, especially for those at lower levels of the framework, and provide learners who have literacy and numeracy needs with suitable support.
- Diversify the range of sources and processes used to gather quality feedback and to collate, analyse, discuss and use it, and then evaluate any changes made.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

External evaluation and review is conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013, which are made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

Self-assessment and participation in external evaluation and review are requirements for maintaining accreditation to provide an approved programme for all TEOs other than universities. The requirements are set through the NZQF Programme Approval and Accreditation Rules 2013, which are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

In addition, the Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 require registered private training establishments to undertake self-assessment and participate in external evaluation and review, in accordance with the External Evaluation and Review Rules (EER) 2013, as a condition of maintaining registration. The Private Training Establishment Registration Rules 2013 are also made by NZQA under section 253 of the Education Act 1989 and approved by the NZQA Board and the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz). The External Evaluation and Review (EER) Rules 2013 are available at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Our-role/Rules/EER-Rules.pdf>, while information about the conduct and methodology for external evaluation and review can be found at <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>.

NZQA

Ph 0800 697 296

E qaadmin@nzqa.govt.nz

www.nzqa.govt.nz

Final report